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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 2008

In Today's Papers

Main Ergenekon Suspects Transferred to High Security Prison

All papers report Ergenekon suspects Sener Eruygur, Hursit Tolon and Ankara Chamber of Commerce President Sinan Aygun were transferred from Istanbul's Metris prison to the F-Type Maximum Security Prison in the neighboring province of Kocaeli. In addition, Istanbul prosecutor Zekeriya Oz has formally objected to the release of Mustafa Balbay, Ankara Bureau Chief of the leftist-nationalist daily Cumhuriyet. Oz also objected the release of eight other suspects last week.

Papers say the indictment prepared for the Ergenekon investigation consists of 40 chapters in 2,500 pages and will include charges against 85 individuals. An additional indictment will be prepared for those taken into custody during the latest roundup, including Tolon, Eruygur, Aygun, as well as other seven suspects under arrest.

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak says the Ergenekon gang planned to carry out bloody acts of provocation, such as a bomb attack in Taksim Square in the heart of Istanbul. In "Empire of Fear," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says intellectuals and journalists were taken into custody and healthy people were ruined in jail while the media close to the AKP government backed all this injustice. The paper quotes opposition MHP leader Devlet Bahceli as saying, "The way Ergenekon operation has been conducted gives us the impression that this investigation is an intimidation campaign."

Death of 'Ergenekon' Suspect in Prison Investigated

All papers report the Justice Ministry has initiated an investigation into the death of 'Ergenekon' suspect Kuddusi Okkir who died after spending one year in jail. Okkir, charged with being a financier of Ergenekon gang, was released from prison last week due to his ailing health and transferred to hospital, where he later died. Justice Ministry appointed two inspectors to study the case of Okkir, an Ergenekon prisoner who had lung cancer and who died a few days after being released. His widow told the press she would apply to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

Editorial Commentary on Ergenekon

"All Hands should be Washed Clean First"

Gungor Mengi wrote in mainstream Vatan (7/9): "In his speech yesterday, PM Erdogan referred to the 'Clean Hands' operation in Italy. The PM questioned, 'Why do those who followed Italy's Clean Hands operation with admiration and who asked when such an operation will take place in our country feeling disturbed when we take such steps?' Of course, the main opposition CHP leader Baykal did not miss this opportunity to score a goal against the PM by saying 'in order to launch an operation like Italy's Clean Hands Operation, ones' own hands should be really clean.'" The Clean Hands operation was an example of judicial bravery that interfered with the mafia scandals and corruption. Maybe, with his words, PM Erdogan was indicating that justice was reaching the powerful people, but one fact should not be ignored - Italy was able to launch the Clean Hands operation because of the independence of its judiciary. There was no obstacle of "parliamentary immunity" in front of the Italian judiciary. The AKP is struggling to control the judiciary while it doesn't allow the lifting of the immunities for the sake of the clean politicians' self confidence."

"This is exactly what a Police State is"

Tufan Turenc commented in mainstream Hurriyet (7/9): "The AKP, under the pretense of being democratic, has managed to turn Turkey into a police state. Some people are starting to realize this fact while some have yet to reach this understanding. Following the Ergenekon investigation, the public is intimidated and concerned that their telephones might be tapped as well. Developments show us that Turkey is now a real police state and everyone carries that fear deep inside them. Kuddusi Okkir's drama forced us to be pushed into this fear syndrome. He was accused and arrested of being the

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financer of the Ergenekon organization and was not released until a few days before his death. Since he was suffering from deadly cancer, he was released to die at his own home. He was jailed for being the financer of the terrorist organization but his family didn't even have enough money to bury him! His funeral was held by the municipality on some of the journalists' request. While he would intervene in many humanitarian issues, for some reason, PM Erdogan never interfered in Okkir's predicament, which is a scandal.

I suppose this is the bitter result of the societal division in AKP's Turkey. Unfortunately, today, in our country humanitarian attitudes are shaped by not very humanitarian measures. This is the sad and serious situation we are in."

Buyukanit: Terrorism is the Biggest Threat to Global Peace
All papers report the Turkish General Staff (TGS) Chief General Yasar Buyukanit said on Tuesday terrorism was the biggest threat for global peace and security in the age of globalization. Addressing the "Silk Road 2008 Generals/Admirals Seminar" held in the Mediterranean city of Antalya, Buyukanit said efforts in diplomacy, intelligence, economy, finance, information and law were also important as much as military methods in combating terrorism, since terrorist organizations act like international crime organizations with their acts such as drug and human trafficking, money laundering, bootlegging and kidnapping for ransom. "For instance, the terrorist organization PKK/Kongra-Gel is responsible for the 80 percent of the heroin smuggled into Europe, extortion in several European countries, and even running guns to the terrorist Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka," he said.

Turkey to Join Mediterranean Summit

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Taraf, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Turkey has accepted France's invitation to the Mediterranean Union Summit, but only after French President Sarkozy called PM Erdogan from his cell phone in Japan. Mainstream Milliyet reports in, "An Invitation to Erdogan, that "French President Nicholas Sarkozy personally phoned Prime Minister Erdogan to invite him to the July 13th Summit in Paris." Thus, "the fiasco scenario is avoided," because EU Leaders promised that this union won't interfere with Turkey's EU accession, Turkey's acceptance is thought to be a good start for the summit. Islamist-oriented Zaman reports in "Sarkozy Called and Erdogan said 'I May Be Able to Come,'" that, "Turkey accepted the invitation following its demands that Turkey's membership to the Mediterranean Union will not affect Turkey's full accession process." Mainstream Sabah reports Sarkozy promised

Erdogan France would be "neutral" during its EU presidency. Leftist Taraf reports Sarkozy's phone call "improved the picture a little more," between Turkey and France.

International Drug Conference in Istanbul

Islamist-oriented dailies Zaman and Yeni Safak report more than 300 drug enforcement officials from 93 countries participated in the 26th Annual International Drug Enforcement Conference (IDEC) held in Istanbul. Turkish Police presided over the 26th Annual International Drug Enforcement Conference (IDEC) in cooperation with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Interior Minister Besir Atalay told the opening of the conference Turkey was no longer a path in drug trade, adding some 20,000 traffickers were captured over the past years. Atalay also noted the PKK was linked to drug trade, and the U.S. has confirmed this. Turkish Police General Director Oguz Kagan Koksali, DEA Acting Administrator Michele Leonhart and US Ambassador to Turkey Ross Wilson were among the key-note speakers of the conference.

TV News:

NTV

Domestic News

- Istanbul Mayor Kadir Topbas called for water conservation to cope with water shortage in the summer.

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- On Tuesday, the Turkish Parliament adopted a motion to extend the mandate of the Turkish peacekeeping troops within the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

- Energy Minister Hilmi Guler said there will be no power cuts this year.

International News

- European Court of Human Rights ruled on Tuesday that Turkey's 10-percent election threshold does not amount to a violation of human rights.

- The European Court of Human Rights ruled Turkey violated the rights of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate by seizing its orphanage on Istanbul's Buyukada Island.

- Secretary Rice signed a deal to base part of Washington's missile defense system in the Czech Republic.

WILSON